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W.M. (40) 77th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 2.

Confidential Annex.

(29th March, 1940.)

SUPREME WAR
COUNCIL: 6th
MEETING (Contd.)

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Supreme War Council had provisionally agreed on the following programme:-

Proposed operation
in Norwegian
Territorial
Waters.

Monday, 1st April, 1940.

Communication to be
addressed to Norwegian
and Swedish Governments.

Thursday, 4th April,
1940, (Evening).

Beginning of Royal
Marine Operation,
accompanied by
Notification to
Netherland and Belgium
Governments of
establishment of
prohibited area on the
Rhine.

Royal Marine
Operation.

(Previous
References:
W.M. (40) 76th
Conclusions,
Minutes 4 and 5.)

Friday, 5th April, 1940.

Laying of mines in
Norwegian territorial
waters.

Monday, 15th April, 1940.

Air action in regard to
rivers and canals
supplementary to Royal
Marine Operation.

The French had expressed a desire that the question of stopping Swedish supplies of ore to Germany from Lulea should be studied, and M. Reynaud had enquired whether we had considered employing aircraft for this purpose. He had been informed that a plan of this kind was being examined; and it had been agreed that plans should at once be prepared by the British and French Staffs for interrupting traffic from Lulea as soon as the Gulf of Bothnia became ice-free.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that it was proposed that three areas in Norwegian territorial waters should be selected as prohibited areas, though in fact at the beginning of the operation it was proposed to lay mines in only two of these areas. He suggested that instead of giving a preliminary warning, it would be better to lay the minefield without warning, but to station patrol craft outside the area for a period of forty-eight hours thus ensuring that no neutral vessels entered the minefield unwarned. It was very desirable that no Norwegian warships should be present while the mines were being laid, but if any such ship did appear, the mine-laying would proceed nevertheless; orders had been given that, if a Norwegian warship were to attempt to intervene, only the minimum action should be taken which might be necessary to make her desist. Each of the three areas selected had been specially chosen to ensure that the laying of a minefield would not prevent access by sea to any Norwegian town or village. Each minefield would extend for six miles from the shore, and could be laid in a period of half an hour. It was not intended to give orders to interfere with Norwegian mine-sweepers, should these attempt to clear a passage, nor was it proposed, at this stage at any rate, to make use of devices to render the mines difficult to sweep.

A discussion then ensued on the details and the timing of, and the announcements to be made in connection with, the Norwegian Territorial Waters and Royal Marine Operations, in the course of which attention was drawn to the following considerations:-

- (i) The Royal Marine Operation was an operation of a novel character, and the French were anxious that at the appropriate time a public announcement should be made justifying it. The general lines of this announcement would necessarily be similar to those followed in the public announcement to be made in regard to the Norwegian Territorial Waters Operation.
- (ii) In these circumstances it would be of advantage, if possible, so to time the two operations as to enable a single public announcement to be made dealing with both.
- (iii) If only one public announcement was to be made, it might be necessary to adjust the provisional time table in such a way as to make the two operations synchronise with one another.
- (iv) It was important that the public announcement in regard to the operation in Norwegian Territorial Waters should be so drafted that we justified our action in violating Norwegian territorial waters, not upon the previous violations of Norwegian territorial waters by Germany, but on the wider ground of the numerous violations of International Law by Germany at sea.
- (v) M. Reynaud had made it clear that the final approval of the French Government to the Royal Marine Operation depended upon the consent of the French War Committee, which, however, he was hopeful of obtaining.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that, in view of the action contemplated, it was very important that the right steps should be taken by the Ministry of Information to prepare public opinion in this country, in Scandinavia and elsewhere. It was particularly important that people generally should realise to the full the atrocious methods which the Germans were following in their sea warfare. He proposed, therefore, to see the Minister of Information and to tell him what we had in mind so that he could take the necessary action. He would propose also to send a Telegram to His Majesty's Ambassador in Washington giving him a full account of our intentions for communication to President Roosevelt very shortly before action was to be taken.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY drew attention to the possibility that the proposed action in Norwegian Territorial Waters might lead the Germans to take forcible action against Norwegian territory and so give us an opportunity for landing forces on Norwegian soil with the consent of the Norwegian Government. It would seem to be important that we should continue in a state of readiness to despatch a light force to Narvik, and possibly also the force that had been planned for Stavanger.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that it was, of course, now out of the question to send the two divisions previously prepared for the main Scandinavian expedition; but the brigade which it had been intended should go to Narvik was still available, and the force for Stavanger formed part of a division which was not due to go oversea till May.

THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF said that the Chiefs of Staff Committee were proposing to submit a Report to the War Cabinet as soon as possible on the action which the Germans were likely to take, and the arrangements which should be made to enable us to counter any such action without delay.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS said that he proposed to make a full communication to the Dominion Governments regarding the questions dealt with at the meeting of the Supreme War Council, other than those relating to military operations. He intended to make no reference to the Royal Marine Operation, but he would like to be able to inform the Dominions of the action proposed to be taken in regard

to Norwegian Territorial Waters, adding merely that some operation from French territory would be undertaken simultaneously.

The War Cabinet:-

(I) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the First Lord of the Admiralty to prepare:-

(a) A detailed scheme setting out the date and time at which:-

(i) The Royal Marine Operation should be begun;

(ii) The notification regarding the Royal Marine Operation should be made to the Belgian and Netherland Governments;

(iii) The Norwegian Territorial Waters Operation should be begun;

(iv) The Norwegian and Swedish Government should be informed of (iii) above;

(v) The public announcement or announcements in regard to the above Operations should be issued;

(b) The draft of the warnings and the public announcements to be made in regard to the above operations.

(II) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

(a) To tell the Minister of Information of the action which it was proposed to take in Norwegian Territorial Waters, so that he could take suitable steps to prepare public opinion.

(b) To give full information to the President of the United States through His Majesty's Ambassador in Washington shortly before the action was to be taken.

- (III) Took note that the Chiefs of Staff Committee would submit as soon as possible a Report on action likely to be taken by the Germans as a result of our action in Norwegian Territorial Waters, and the arrangements which should be made to enable us to counter any such action without delay.
- (IV) Approved the line which the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs proposed to take in making a communication to the Dominion Governments in regard to the meeting of the Supreme War Council held the previous day.

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